VII

Of New Principalities That Are Acquired by Others' Arms and Fortune

Those who become princes from private individual solely by fortune become so with little trouble, but maintain themselves with much. They have no difficulty along the path because they fly there, but all the difficulties arise when

they are in place. And such princes come to be when a state is given to someone either for money or by the favor of whoever gives it, as happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and of the Hellespont, where they were made princes by Darius so that they might hold on to those cities for his security and glory;[1] as also those emperors were made who from private individual attained the empire through corrupting the soldiers.[2] These persons rest simply on the will and fortune of whoever has given a state to them, which are two very inconstant and unstable things. They do not know how to hold and they cannot hold that rank: they do not know how, because if one is not a man of great ingenuity and virtue, it is not reasonable, that having always lived in private fortune, he should know how to command; they cannot hold that rank because they do not have forces that can be friendly and faithful to them. Then, too, states that come to be suddenly, like all other things in nature that are born and grow quickly, cannot have roots and branches, so that the first adverse weather[3] eliminates them—unless, indeed, as was said, those who have suddenly become princes have so much virtue that they know immediately how to prepare to keep what fortune has placed in their laps; and the foundations that others have laid before becoming princes they lay afterwards.

To both of the modes mentioned of becoming prince, by virtue or by fortune, I want to bring up two examples that have occurred in days within our memory; and these are Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Francesco became duke of Milan from private individual by proper means[4] and with a great virtue of his own; and that which he had acquired with a thousand pains he maintained with little trouble. On the other hand Cesare Borgia, called Duke

1. Darius I (521–486 B.C.), not Darius III of Chapter 4.
2. On the election of Roman emperors by soldiers, see Chapter 19.
3. Or time.
4. For this phrase see NM, *Discourses on Livy* I 41.

Valentino by the vulgar, acquired his state through the fortune of his father and lost it through the same, notwithstanding the fact that he made use of every deed and did all those things that should be done by a prudent and virtuous man to put his roots in the states that the arms and fortune of others had given him. For, as was said above, whoever does not lay his foundations at first might be able, with great virtue, to lay them later, although they might have to be laid with hardship for the architect and with danger to the building. Thus, if one considers all the steps of the duke, one will see that he had laid for himself great foundations for future power, which I do not judge superfluous to discuss; for I do not know what better teaching I could give to a new prince than the example of his actions. And if his orders did not bring profit to him, it was not his fault, because this arose from an extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune.

Alexander VI had very many difficulties, both present and future, when he decided to make his son the duke great. First, he did not see the path to being able to make him lord of any state that was not a state of the Church; and when he decided to take that of the Church, he knew that the duke of Milan and the Venetians would not consent to it because Faenza and Rimini had for long been under the protection of the Venetians. Besides this, he saw that the arms of Italy, and especially the arms of anyone whom he might have been able to make use of, were in the hands of those who had to fear the greatness of the pope; and so he could not trust them, as they were all with the Orsini and the Colonna and their accomplices.[5] It was thus necessary to upset those orders and to bring disorder to their states so as to be able to make himself lord securely of part of them. This was easy for him, because he found that the Venetians, moved by other causes, were engaged in getting the French to come

5. The Orsini and Colonna were the two principal noble families of Rome which had long fought for control of Rome and the papacy.

back into Italy, which he not only did not oppose but made easier by the dissolution of the former marriage of King Louis. So the king came into Italy with the aid of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander, and he was no sooner in Milan than the pope got men from him for a campaign in Romagna, which was granted to him because of the reputation of the king. So after the duke had acquired Romagna and beaten down the Colonna, two things prevented him from maintaining that and going further ahead: one, that his arms did not appear to him to be faithful; the other, the will of France: that is, the Orsini arms of which he had availed himself might fail under him, and not only prevent him from acquiring but also take away what he had acquired; and the king might also do the same to him. He had a test of the Orsini when, after the capture of Faenza, he attacked Bologna and saw them go coolly to that attack; and regarding the king, the duke knew his mind when after he had taken the duchy of Urbino, he attacked Tuscany, and the king made him desist from that campaign. Hence the duke decided to depend no longer on the arms and fortune of others. And the first thing he did was to weaken the Orsini and Colonna parties in Rome. For he gained to himself all their adherents, who were gentlemen, by making them his gentlemen and by giving them large allowances; and he honored them, according to their qualities, with commands and with government posts, so that in a few months the partisan affections in their minds were eliminated, and all affection turned toward the duke. After this he waited for an opportunity to eliminate the heads of the Orsini, since he had dispersed those of the Colonna house. A good one came to him, and he used it better; for when the Orsini became aware, late, that the greatness of the duke and of the Church was ruin for them, they held a meeting at Magione, near Perugia.[6] From that arose rebellion in Urbino, tumults in

6. October 9, 1502.

Romagna, and infinite dangers for the duke, who overcame them all with the aid of the French. And when his reputation had been restored, he trusted neither France nor other external forces, and so as not to put them to the test, he turned to deceit. He knew so well how to dissimulate his intent that the Orsini themselves, through Signor Paolo, became reconciled with him. The duke did not fail to fulfill every kind of duty to secure Signor Paolo, giving him money, garments, and horses, so that their simplicity brought them into the duke's hands at Sinigaglia.[7] So, when these heads had been eliminated, and their partisans had been turned into his friends, the duke had laid very good foundations for his power, since he had all Romagna with the duchy of Urbino. He thought, especially, that he had acquired the friendship of Romagna, and that he had gained all those peoples to himself since they had begun to taste well-being.

And because this point is deserving of notice and of being imitated by others, I do not want to leave it out. Once the duke had taken over Romagna, he found it had been commanded by impotent lords who had been readier to despoil their subjects than to correct them, and had given their subjects matter for disunion, not for union. Since that province was quite full of robberies, quarrels, and every other kind of insolence, he judged it necessary to give it good government, if he wanted to reduce it to peace and obedience to a kingly arm. So he put there Messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and ready man, to whom he gave the fullest power.[8] In a short time Remirro reduced it to peace and unity, with the very greatest reputation for himself. Then

7. See NM's narration of this event in "A Description of the Method Used by Duke Valentino in Killing Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, and Others," in Allan Gilbert, trans., *Chief Works of Machiavelli,* 3 vols. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1965), 1:163–69.

8. power: *potestà,* not *potenzia;* the phrase recalls the papal claim of *plenitudo potestatis.*

the duke judged that such excessive authority was not necessary, because he feared that it might become hateful; and he set up a civil court in the middle of the province, with a most excellent president, where each city had its advocate. And because he knew that past rigors had generated some hatred for Remirro, to purge the spirits of that people and to gain them entirely to himself, he wished to show that if any cruelty had been committed, this had not come from him but from the harsh nature of his minister. And having seized this opportunity, he had him placed one morning in the piazza at Cesena in two pieces, with a piece of wood and a bloody knife beside him. The ferocity of this spectacle left the people at once satisfied and stupefied.

But let us return to where we left off. I say that when the duke found himself very powerful and secure in part against present dangers—since he had armed to suit himself and had in good part eliminated those arms which were near enough to have attacked[9] him—there remained for him, if he wanted to proceed with acquisition, to consider the king of France. For he knew that this would not be tolerated by the king, who had been late to perceive his error. And so he began to seek out new friendships and to vacillate with France in the expedition that the French were making toward the kingdom of Naples against the Spanish who were besieging Gaeta. His intent was to secure himself against them:[10] in which he would soon have succeeded, if Alexander had lived.

And these were his arrangements as to present things. But as to the future, he had to fear, first, that a new successor in the Church might not be friendly to him and might seek to take away what Alexander had given him. He thought he might secure himself against this in four modes: first, to eliminate the bloodlines of all those lords he had

9. lit.: offended.
10. assure himself of Spanish support, or against the French.

despoiled, so as to take that opportunity away from the pope; second, to win over to himself all the gentlemen in Rome, as was said, so as to be able to hold the pope in check with them; third, to make the College of Cardinals as much his as he could; fourth, to acquire so much empire before the pope died that he could resist a first attack[11] on his own. Of these four things he had accomplished three at the death of Alexander; the fourth he almost accomplished. For of the lords he had despoiled he killed as many as he could reach, and very few saved themselves; the Roman gentlemen had been won over to himself; in the College he had a very large party; and as to new acquisition, he had planned to become lord over Tuscany, he already possessed Perugia and Piombino, and he had taken Pisa under his protection. And, as soon as he did not have to pay regard to France (which he did not have to do any longer, since the French had already been stripped of the kingdom by the Spanish, so that each of them was forced of necessity to buy his friendship), he would have jumped on Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena would have quickly yielded, in part through envy of the Florentines, in part through fear; the Florentines had no remedy. If he had succeeded in this (as he was succeeding the same year that Alexander died), he would have acquired such force and reputation that he would have stood by himself and would no longer have depended on the fortune and force of someone else, but on his own power[12] and virtue. But Alexander died five years after he[13] had begun to draw his sword. He left the duke with only the state of Romagna consolidated, with all the others in the air, between two very powerful enemy armies, and sick to death. And there was such ferocity and such virtue in the duke, and he knew so well how men have to be won over or lost, and

11. lit.: impetus.
12. *potenzia*.
13. Alexander or Cesare?

so sound were the foundations that he had laid in so little time, that if he had not had these armies on his back or if he had been healthy, he would have been equal to every difficulty. And that his foundations were good one may see: Romagna waited for him for more than a month; in Rome, though he was half-alive, he remained secure; and although the Baglioni, Vitelli, and Orsini came to Rome, none followed them against him; if he could not make pope whomever he wanted, at least it would not be someone he did not want. But if at the death of Alexander the duke had been healthy, everything would have been easy for him. And he told me, on the day that Julius II was created,[14] that he had thought about what might happen when his father was dying, and had found a remedy for everything, except that he never thought that at his death he himself would also be on the point of dying.

Thus, if I summed up all the actions of the duke, I would not know how to reproach him; on the contrary, it seems to me he should be put forward, as I have done, to be imitated by all those who have risen to empire through fortune and by the arms of others. For with his great spirit and high intention, he could not have conducted himself otherwise and the only things in the way of his plans were the brevity of Alexander's life and his own sickness. So whoever judges it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to gain friends to himself, to conquer either by force or by fraud, to make himself loved and feared by the people, and followed and revered by the soldiers, to eliminate those who can or might offend[15] you, to renew old orders through new modes, to be severe and pleasant, magnanimous and liberal, to eliminate an unfaithful military, to create a new one, to maintain friend-

14. NM was in Rome at the time of the conclave that elected Julius II pope in October-December 1503.

15. *offendere* (here and below) is not merely to slight, but to harm so as to cause offense.

ships with kings and princes so that they must either benefit you with favor or be hesitant to offend you—can find no fresher examples than the actions of that man. One could only accuse him in the creation of Julius as pontiff, in which he made a bad choice; for, as was said, though he could not make a pope to suit himself, he could have kept anyone from being pope. And for the papacy he should never have consented to those cardinals whom he had offended or who, having become pope, would have to be afraid of him. For men offend either from fear or for hatred. Those whom he had offended were, among others, San Piero ad Vincula, Colonna, San Giorgio, Ascanio;[16] all the others, if they had become pope, would have had to fear him, except Rouen and the Spaniards, the latter because of kinship and obligation, the former for his power, because he was connected to the kingdom of France.[17] Therefore the duke, before everything else, should have created a Spaniard pope, and if he could not, should have consented to Rouen, and not San Piero ad Vincula. And whoever believes that among great personages new benefits will make old injuries be forgotten deceives himself.[18] So the duke erred in this choice and it was the cause of his ultimate ruin.

16. In this irreverent listing of cardinals, Giuliano della Rovere (who became Pope Julius II) is named by his church in Rome, San Pietro in Vincoli; Giovanni Colonna; Raffaelo Riario, named for San Giorgio; Ascanio Sforza.

17. Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, bishop of Rouen; see Chapter 3.

18. See NM, *Discourses on Livy* III 4.